

CHICAGO - U.S. Rep. Kirk, Waukegan Mayor Richard Hyde, State of Illinois and Lake County officials presented the final outline for plans to complete the cleanup of Waukegan Harbor. Led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the \$35 million cleanup will permanently remove a threat to human health while unlocking an estimated \$800 million in new economic development for northern Illinois.

“Our final cleanup plan will remove the PCB danger from the harbor, unlocking Waukegan’s real potential as a Lake Michigan recreational community,” said Congressman Kirk. “We plan to combine \$24 million in federal funds with \$4 million from the state, \$2.5 million from Lake County, \$2 million from Waukegan and \$3 million from private parties to remove over 250,000 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated sediment from our harbor.”

In addition to Kirk and Hyde, city engineers, local businesses and community groups made presentations before the EPA’s Great Lakes Legacy Act Technical Review Committee on initial engineering plans and financial estimates for the cleanup. The hearing is a key step in applying for \$24 million federal assistance from the Legacy Act, a program enacted by legislation sponsored by Congressman Kirk in 2001 to cleanup the Great Lakes.

In the 1970s and 80s, Outboard Marine Corporation dumped Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) straight into the harbor. In 1992, the EPA supervised a program that eliminated 90% of this contamination. The final cleanup will remove the rest, opening the way for Waukegan to become one of the first harbors on the Great Lakes to be environmentally restored.

The Legacy Act Technical Review Committee will help identify any remaining requirements for the city’s cleanup plan and will provide the key recommendation to EPA’s Great Lakes National Program Office that will make the final funding decisions. If sufficient Legacy Act funding is available and the project ranks well, Waukegan will be invited to sign a final project agreement with the EPA.

“After the expansion of O’Hare Airport, the cleanup of Waukegan Harbor is the most important economic development project in northeastern Illinois,” said Congressman Kirk. “Cleanup of the harbor is essential to attracting recreational investments and improving property values. The recovery of fish will also help seniors recall better days on Lake Michigan’s shoreline. In sum, we owe a duty to the public to clean up this harbor.”